

budget amendment. The White House has called for a balanced approach in this debate. This bill does not just suggest balance, it actually mandates it. So I strongly urge my Democratic friends to join us in supporting this legislation.

Let me note in closing another virtue of the cut, cap, and balance plan. It does not raise taxes. Why is this a good thing? There are many reasons Americans do not like tax hikes. First, they know government is bound to waste the money. Americans have seen what government does with new tax revenue: It wastes it on things such as turtle tunnels. Second, it never uses it to pay down deficits and debt. So if you are concerned about the size of our debt, then raising taxes is a sure way to ensure that nothing gets done about it—absolutely nothing.

The reason we have a debt crisis is government spends every cent it gets—and then some. Sending Washington more money will not solve the problem, it will enable it.

Our tax system certainly is not perfect. But until Washington can prove it is responsible with our tax dollars, we should not be sending it more of those tax dollars. That is why Republicans have focused on cuts in this debate, and that is why every one of us—Democrat and Republican—should support cut, cap, and balance.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BARRASSO. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

(The remarks of Mr. BARRASSO pertaining to the introduction of S. 1395 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. BARRASSO. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, following leader remarks, I will move to proceed to H.R. 2560. The time until 2 p.m.

today will be equally divided and controlled, with the Republicans controlling the first 30 minutes and the majority controlling the next 30 minutes.

We will have a full debate on this bill over the next few days. I hope we can accelerate the time. If people feel we have debated it enough, I hope we can move to some other matter.

CUT, CAP, AND BALANCE

Mr. REID. Mr. President, first, let me get this off my chest. Coming in today, I just heard the announcement that the House of Representatives is taking the weekend off. I have reached out to the Speaker. I have not had an opportunity to speak to him. But I want everyone who can hear my voice to understand that time is of the essence. We are running out of time.

Procedurally, things cannot move very quickly through the Senate under the best of circumstances, and when there are people who want to cause problems, it takes a long time to get things done. There are people who serve in the Senate who say they do not believe—and they will fight to make sure we do not—we should raise the debt ceiling. In fact, they are saying: Let's default on our debt.

I think this is a very bad picture for our country, to have the House of Representatives out this weekend when we have to likely wait for them to send us something because I understand that the negotiations taking place deal with revenues, which constitutionally have to start in the House of Representatives. So I think it is just untoward—that is the kindest word I can say—to have the House of Representatives out this weekend. What a bad picture that shows the country. We have 12 days before our Nation does the unthinkable, forever undermining the full faith and credit of our great country.

Members of Congress come from 50 different States, but we all serve one Nation. The American people deserve better than leaders who each stake out their own positions—sometimes radical positions—forsaking the good of the Nation. The American people expect us to find common ground no matter how difficult it may seem.

Every reasonable voice in America has warned us that a default on this Nation's financial obligations would not only be a blight on our reputation but would precipitate a global economic crisis that we have never, ever seen. These warnings have come from the banking industry and the business community; they have come from our finest economists and shrewdest investors; they have come from former legislators, past policymakers, both Democrats and Republicans; and they have come from reasonable people here in our Congress.

It is clear to me that we have to increase the debt ceiling. That is what JOHN BOEHNER, the Republican Speaker of the House, said this spring. But it is now summer. He also said this: Not

raising the debt limit would have a serious implication for the worldwide economy and jobs here in America.

That is the Speaker of the House of Representatives. His deputy, ERIC CANTOR, agrees. Last week, CANTOR said:

We want to make sure that we avoid default. We want to make sure that we avoid going past August 2nd without raising the debt ceiling.

And my Republican counterpart here in the Senate, the senior Senator from Kentucky, said he would support the debt limit as long as Congress used the opportunity to do "something really important" about the national debt.

Democrats are willing to join with our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to do, as my Republican counterpart said, "something really important." We have already shown our willingness to make tough decisions for the sake of finding common ground even if it means drawing the ire of our own political party. Unfortunately, the loudest, shrillest voices from the Republican Party are not reasonable leaders but tea party extremists.

Congress has days, not weeks, to reassure the markets that when this great Nation issues an IOU, we stand by it, we do not turn into deadbeats when the bills come due. If you want to know how important this issue is, ask Ronald Reagan. Here is what he said about the importance of averting this kind of default:

The United States has a special responsibility to itself and the world to meet its obligations. It means we have a well-earned reputation for reliability and credibility, two things that set us apart from much of the world.

President Reagan took the threat of default seriously. I will repeat what he said:

The United States has a special responsibility to itself and the world to meet its obligations. It means we have a well-earned reputation of reliability and credibility, two things that set us apart from much of the world.

President Reagan took the threat of default seriously. So do reasonable Members of Congress today. And this is reasonable Republican Members of Congress. Yet I fear the closer we get to disaster, the further we get from making the arrangement needed to raise the debt and stop a default.

Democrats have shown they are willing to work with Republicans on any serious, reasonable plan that averts default and cuts the deficit in a balanced way. Now it is time for House Republicans to show they are also willing to get serious. A plan to decimate Social Security, Medicare, and every other Federal benefit plan, while protecting hundreds of billions of dollars in special interest tax breaks, is not a serious plan. The Republicans so-called cut, cap, and balance plan does not have one chance in a million of passing the Senate.

The moment for partisan games has long since passed. It is time for patriots on both sides of the aisle to join

hands and actually govern. So I ask, Will reasonable Republicans join us in forging a compromise for the good of our country?

CUT, CAP, AND BALANCE ACT OF 2011—MOTION TO PROCEED

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 106, H.R. 2560.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A motion to proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 106, H.R. 2560, an act to cut, cap, and balance the Federal budget.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the time until 2 p.m. will be equally divided and controlled by the two leaders or their designees, with Senators permitted to speak therein for a period of up to 10 minutes each, with the Republicans controlling the first 30 minutes and the majority controlling the next 30 minutes.

The Senator from South Dakota is recognized.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I rise today to speak to the issue the Senate is going to be considering for the next couple of days and ultimately voting on, it sounds like, possibly sometime on Saturday; that is, the cut, cap, and balance proposal that has been put forward by the House of Representatives.

The House passed this particular proposal the night before last. It is now pending under consideration in the Senate. What I would suggest to my colleagues in the Senate is this: It is the only proposal out there. It is the only plan we have to vote on.

It has now been about 813 days—I think is the correct number of days—since a budget was passed in the Senate. The Democratic majority has not submitted one for consideration here. We have not had votes on a budget. We have been operating without a budget. There is no plan.

The House of Representatives passed a budget earlier this year. It was criticized by many people here—Democrats—as being something they didn't want to support. There wasn't an alternative put forward by the Senate Democrats or by the President. The President did put a budget forward in his annual budget release earlier this year, but the Senate voted it down 97 to 0. There wasn't a single Member, Republican or Democrat, who voted in favor of the President's budget proposal. Why? Because it would have raised spending, raised the debt—almost doubled the debt over the next 10 years, and it would have increased taxes by over \$1 trillion.

Overall, I don't think those are the elements you want to be in a budget. You want to reduce spending and put a plan into place that starts getting a trajectory in place that starts reducing the amount of debt we have. You certainly don't want to raise taxes in an

economic downturn, when you are dealing with 9.2 percent unemployment. That is the only budget submission we have seen from the President.

As I said, there has not been anything in the context of the debt limit debate put forward by the Democrats in the Senate or by the President. The only proposal we have in front of us is the Cut, cap, and Balance proposal passed by the House of Representatives. You can say the House arguably has done its work. They have put forward a plan that we need to act on.

To suggest for a minute that there isn't an alternative, that the Republicans are being unreasonable in all this, I think completely misses the point, because that is the only plan out there. If you don't like that one, where is your budget? We have had 813 days without a budget. We don't have a plan to deal with the debt limit. What we have to vote on and consider and debate today is the Cut, Cap, and Balance proposal.

That is significant for a number of reasons. One, I believe the way to deal with the crisis we have in this country today—a debt crisis that gets worse by the day—is to get spending under control. I believe fundamentally that the problem we have in this country is not a question of not enough revenue, it is a question of too much spending. The government has gotten too big, has grown too fast. It is spinning out of control, in the minds of most Americans. They want to see us rein it in and get government spending and debt under control.

Yesterday, I read this on the floor, but I want to read it again. Ironically, it is a letter I got from a Boy Scout in South Dakota who is earning his merit badge. He wrote me a letter and said this:

I feel that the Federal Government needs a balanced budget. If we don't, the debt gets larger each year. I feel that there are two solutions for this. In our house, we are careful to only spend what my mom and dad earn. That needs come first and what is left is for wants. Many times we were told no when we ask for something. With my allowance and lawn mowing money, I divide it between donations, saving, and spending. I can't spend more than I make.

I think there are a couple of very powerful observations in this statement. The first is, obviously, it is not lost even on this young American how important it is to live within your means, and that you cannot spend money you don't have. That is clearly a lesson he has already learned. We need to learn that in Washington, DC.

Second is how profoundly this issue impacts the next generation. If, in fact, we fail to act to get spending and debt under control and to put us on a sustainable fiscal course, the next generation is going to pay a powerful price for our irresponsibility.

I submit again to my colleagues this is fundamentally a spending issue. A lot of folks talk about the need for more revenue. The President talks about wanting more revenue. The ma-

jority leader just said the House is out of town and how that is terrible because revenue measures have to originate in the House. Many of us believe this can be solved without more revenue, that we don't have to raise taxes on the American people or American small businesses to solve what is inherently and fundamentally a spending problem.

If we want to balance the budget, we have to get spending under control. Five times since 1969 the budget was balanced in this country. In each case, the average amount we spent was just under 18.7 percent of our GDP, so that is kind of the benchmark for the five times in our history since 1969 when the budget has been balanced. The 40-year average of spending to GDP in this country is 20.6 percent. That is the 40-year average. The five times we balanced the budget, it was 18.7 percent of GDP. This year, we are spending 24.3 percent of GDP. If you look at the President's budget—and even what are, in my view, optimistic assumptions about economic growth—you are still looking at that sort of a course for the foreseeable future. With what I think are going to be the exploding costs of the health care bill that was passed last year, it could be much higher than that.

My point is this: If you can balance your budget at 18.7 percent Federal spending as a percentage of GDP, and we are spending at 24.3 percent this year, we are 30 percent higher in terms of what we spend than those times in which we were able to balance the budget. If you are talking about balancing the budget, it means getting spending under control, reining in out-of-control Washington spending.

For a long time, I have believed that we need not only what is proposed in the Cut, Cap, and Balance bill, in terms of an immediate reduction in spending, caps on spending in the future years, but also a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution. That is something I have campaigned on my entire political career. I believe it is necessary.

Washington has not demonstrated in the past the political courage that is necessary to get spending under control. The consequence of that is we now have a Federal debt that is over \$14 trillion, and we are actually talking about raising the borrowing authority of this country simply because we get further and further into debt every year. We are running \$1 trillion deficits, and at that rate you are obviously going to continue to accumulate enormous amounts of debt. It means getting your budget balanced. We don't do that around here. Most States—49 of them—have some form of a balanced budget amendment that requires them to make sure their spending doesn't exceed the amount of revenue they have coming in. I think that is needed.

When I first got to the Congress as a freshman Congressman in 1997, there was a vote in the Senate on a balanced budget amendment. It failed by one